Sen. Kagan SB948 Testimony_ Internet-Delivered Bal
Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan
Position: FAV

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Education, Energy, and
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Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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SB948 Testimony: Internet-Delivered Ballots

Education, Energy, and the Environment (& Elections!) Committee

Wednesday, February 25, 2026 1PM

Internet-delivered ballots hypothetically makes voting more accessible. In practice, they present real problems. The return rate for these ballots is only 39%-- compared with 70% for mail-in ballots.

Given the name, many voters assume they can submit a ballot entirely online. In reality, they must complete a detailed, multi-step, paper-based process. Faced with this, some voters give up, while others cast provisional ballots at the polls-- an outcome that is frustrating and burdens Local Boards of Elections.

In a world where we shop, bank, and even date online, it is understandable that Marylanders might expect to vote online as well. However, many do not realize how complicated the current process actually is. The Maryland State Board of Elections uses ten steps and a full guidebook-- 20 pages long-- to teach voters how to complete an Internet-delivered ballot. In general, a voter must:

- Have access to a printer and toner cartridge;
- Print and complete the ballot;
- Find a number 10 envelope (business-sized) and address it correctly;
- Pay for first-class postage if mailing the ballot (unlike mail-in ballots, voters using Internet-delivered ballots must pay their own postage); and
- Ensure the ballot is delivered to a post office to be postmarked no later than Election Day **or** deposit it in an official ballot drop-off box.

When thousands of these Internet-delivered ballots arrive at our Local Boards of Elections:

- The envelope must be opened;
- Because regular paper can't be scanned, the ballot must be manually duplicated and verified by bipartisan teams; and
- Only then can the ballot be scanned and tabulated.

This time-consuming process adds significant administrative burdens and costs while increasing the risk of missing certification deadlines.

SB948 would require that application for an Internet-delivered ballot clearly explain each step required to complete, return, and process it. Voters would be required to affirm their understanding before selecting this option. Instead of automatically receiving Internet-delivered ballots in future elections, voters would need to affirmatively opt in each election cycle.

Internet-delivered ballots are a useful tool for those who need it, but the significantly lower return rate shows that relying on them as a recurring voting method risks disenfranchising voters. Educating voters about the realities and limitations of this process is essential.

NOTE: We are proposing amendments clarifying that these ballots must be affirmatively selected each election cycle and renaming them “Print at home” ballots to reduce confusion and improve voter understanding.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB948.

MoCo Board of Elections Testimony re SB 948 Web-De
Uploaded by: David Naimon
Position: FWA

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

For the record, my name is David Naimon and I'm the President of the Montgomery County Board of Elections. It's an honor to testify here today, especially in front of my longtime younger friends, Chair Feldman and Vice Chair Kagan. I'd also like to thank Senators Feldman, Kagan, Brooks, Carozza, and Gallion and the staff of this Committee who toured our office in Gaithersburg in October – it was a great honor to welcome you, have you meet our excellent staff, and see how we operate in greater detail.

Our Board supports SB 948 with amendments, as I will explain. For the 2024 general election, Montgomery County had more than 35,000 voters who chose to receive web-delivered mail-in ballots (the most in the state, almost as many as the next two counties combined), and 18% of our mail-in ballot requests were for web-delivery. However, these ballots constituted 38% of unreturned mail-in ballots, so we have a lower return rate for web-delivered ballots. We agree with Senator Kagan about the importance of educating voters about what is required for these ballots to make sure they know what they're getting and what they need to do to return their ballots.

We support the first part of the bill (see P. 2, lines 23-31), which would require voters who choose the web-delivered ballot option to be provided a detailed description of the process for "obtaining, completing, returning, and processing" the ballot. We would propose two amendments to make sure that voters know that "web-delivered" ballots may *not* be "web-returned" and they need to print and mark a hard copy: (1) add "printing," to the list on page 2, line 27, after "obtaining", and (2) add a provision that the web-delivered ballots would be called "print your own" ballots, as we now call them in Montgomery County. The latter amendment could be patterned after section 9-301(c) of the Election Article, which calls for election officials to refer to absentee ballots as "mail-in ballots."

We do not support the second part of the bill (pp. 3-5, but see especially p. 4, lines 15-17), which provides that a voter on the permanent mail-in ballot list may not choose to receive a "print your own" ballot for more than one election cycle. There are a number of reasons why:

1. The permanent mail-in ballot list would become a misnomer for voters who choose this method of voting because it would no longer be permanent for tens of thousands of voters. They would need to change methods to remain on the list. The list was designed to simplify the process for voters and this would do the opposite.
2. Requiring voters to reapply every election year would defeat the purpose of the list and add unnecessary paperwork for both voters who prefer this voting method and

staff who process the paperwork. (When I say paperwork, I'm including its electronic equivalent.)

3. We have many voters who travel a lot (in Montgomery County, I think of lawyers at national or international law firms, auditors, and executives at Marriott, Choice Hotels, biotech firms, or other national or international businesses, but I'm sure there are many other examples across the state), and it's reasonable for them to want to print their ballots wherever they are when the ballots are available and not to have to return home to get them.

4. It is unfair to those voters who travel a lot *domestically* to say that their use of "print your own ballots" is limited while those who travel *to other countries* have no such limit, but we're required by federal law to provide this option for military and overseas voters. I also think it's unfair generally to allow certain classes of voters to use a voting method without limit while limiting it for other voters.

5. Some voters don't have reliable USPS delivery and others won't have it if they are out of town, especially if they are in rural areas that might be affected by the USPS delivery changes and postmark rules, which delay afternoon pickups and potentially the postmarking of otherwise timely ballots.

6. Some voters don't trust the USPS (whether because of their views about the current Administration, a future one of the other party, or just their views of the USPS), which is potentially involved in both sending ballots to voters and returning voted ballots to us. While we have an excellent relationship with our local postmasters and appreciate their work with us, the limitation in this bill could require those voters to use a system that they do not trust when we have alternatives that, while admittedly sometimes cumbersome, address those concerns.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide our views and this committee's continued strong interest in our election system. I'd be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

2-25-2026 FWA SB0948 Absentee Voter List.pdf

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FWA

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND
MARYLAND

Live the life you want.

From: Ronza Othman, President
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
15 Charles Plaza, #3002
Baltimore, MD 21201 president@nfbmd.org

To: Senate Energy, Education, and the Environment Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the Senate Energy, Education, and the Environment Committee to give a favorable report with amendment to SB0948 – Internet Ballot Limitations. This bill imposes limitations on the frequency of a voter's ability to use the internet-delivered ballot and ends the permanent internet-delivered ballot list. As it stands, this proposed legislation directly violates the Appellate Court Decision in National Federation of the Blind v. Lamone, which originally established electronic ballot delivery as a right for voters with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Help America Vote Act. To that end, we strongly recommend that this bill be amended.

The blind, and others with print disabilities, are able to read and independently mark our ballots when they are delivered to us via the state's electronic delivery process. We then use our assistive technology, such as text to speech software, to read and mark the ballot. We have a right to vote this way per the NFB v. Lamone Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals decision, and limiting our ability to do so to one election would violate our civil rights. In addition, those of us who need to vote in this method are not going to change our voting method, and requiring us to elect this method of voting for every single election will add an unnecessary burden, particularly since the process of requesting to be placed on the permanent absentee list is hard enough as it is given our print disabilities.

We are therefore requesting an amendment that exempts voters who are blind and otherwise print disabled from being subjected to the provisions of this bill in the same way that military and overseas voters have been exempted.

On page five of this bill, it further expands on this by saying it "shall require the voter to choose a different method for receiving an absentee ballot for the next election cycle." In effect, this bill relinquishes the ability for people with print disabilities to make a permanent request to receive the ballot over the internet. This is another example of voter suppression.

Voters with disabilities deserve the same right as the non-disabled population to cast their ballot privately and secretly. By limiting the only method of receiving and reading the information independently for absentee voters with disabilities, you are telling disabled people that their vote doesn't matter.

For those reasons, we ask for a favorable report conditional on amendment on SB0948. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.

National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
Ronza Othman, *President NFBMD* | 15 Charles Plaza, #3002, Baltimore, MD 21201 **|** 443-426-4110**|** www.nfbmd.org

SB 948_ Election Law - Internet-Delivered Absente

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: UNF

SB 948: Election Law - Internet-Delivered Absentee Ballots - Information and Receipt Limitation: Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Education, Energy & the Environment Committee:

I am writing to strongly urge you to **OPPOSE SB 948,** *Election Law - Internet-Delivered Absentee Ballots - Information and Receipt Limitation.*

While I appreciate the bill's intent to add some safeguards—such as requiring a detailed modal box explanation and affirmative voter confirmation for internet-delivered absentee ballots—the measures fall far short of addressing the serious security and integrity risks associated with delivering blank absentee ballots via the internet.

Internet delivery of ballots, even blank ones, introduces unnecessary vulnerabilities, including potential interception, alteration during transmission, or exploitation through phishing or malware. Unlike traditional mailed ballots, **electronic methods lack robust chain-of-custody protections** and can compromise voter privacy by linking identifiable information to ballot access in ways that paper systems do not. **Experts in election security have long warned that any internet-based ballot handling increases risks of hacking, coercion, or errors that could undermine public confidence in our elections.**

The bill's main restrictions—limiting permanent absentee voters to internet delivery for only one election cycle and requiring them to switch methods afterward—do not eliminate these risks; they merely delay or redistribute them. Voters on permanent status (often those with disabilities or mobility issues) may still face barriers if forced to change methods repeatedly, while the core problem of internet vulnerability remains unaddressed.

Maryland's current absentee voting system, centered on secure mail delivery with signature verification and tracking, already provides accessible, auditable, and verifiable options for all voters. **We should prioritize strengthening and expanding proven paper-based systems rather than expanding or perpetuating internet-delivered options.**

For these reasons, I respectfully ask you to **vote against SB 948** and support alternatives that enhance election security without relying on internet transmission of ballots.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration to this important matter and for your service to Maryland voters.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals